

CONFERENCE *connection*

Alabama • Georgia • Mississippi
South Carolina • Tennessee • NW Florida



SOUTHEAST UCC Conference

November 15, 2016

From the Conference Office

A Prayer of Thanksgiving

Conference Historian Michael Stroud wrote a beautiful prayer of thanksgiving as part of the monthly historical article celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the Southeast Conference. [Read it on our website.](#)



Moderator's Message

by JR Finney

While the presidential election made many happy, unfortunately, the message of the winning side has made many of the people we serve in UCC not to be among them. The despair, angry and fear of many is very visible and all too noticeable. I would be remiss if I didn't admit that as a gay African American male, I'm among them. It was hard to watch the results of this first nation election that took place since the gutting of the Voting Rights Act. It alarming to think of the possibility of 20 million plus people now facing the danger of losing health insurance. And it downright frightening to consider the threat to civil liberties on the horizon for the communities I serve.



Yet I'm reminded of the famous words of President Franklin D. Roosevelt in his first Inaugural Address in 1933: **"The only thing we have to fear is fear itself -nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance."** Regardless of one's

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December 6, 2016
Web Meeting

partisanship, these words still ring true today. The UCC, having stood on the right side of every social justice issue, is now needed more than ever before to help convert the retreat of fear that many of our people now face, into an advancement of hope.

The work, mission and message of our National Church and Southeast Conference is more imperative than ever as a lifeline of hope. But it requires the efforts of our individual members supporting their local congregation's ministries with their time, talents, and gifts. It also includes local congregations having a global outlook supporting the ministries of the Conference and wider church through the **5 for 5** ministries, especially the "**Our Church's Wider Mission (OWCM)**."

With many facing discernable fear, it's vital that our message of being part of God's continuing testament, embracing all kinds of communities is heard, "**Because God is still speaking!**" Likewise, it's also vital that the UCC, SEC and our local churches have the support needed to continue our extravagant welcome extending hospitality as a sign of God's inclusive love. In the face of fear, people need to hear the message that "**No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here ... 'Because God is still speaking!'**"

Finally, it's essential we all support the UCC, SEC and our local congregations in helping those among us to "**never (allow their fear to) place a period where God has placed a comma.**" As people of faith, we still believe in the hope that's found in being part of God's continuing testament. Let's convert the retreat of fear into an advancement of hope, trusting in God's love, mercy and grace. But it takes all of us, supporting the efforts to ensure that "**God is still speaking,**" is heard.



Prayer Requests

- For all those who will travel to be with family on Thanksgiving day, for those who will provide welcome for others, and for those for whom this day is not one of gratitude but of pain and sorrow and loneliness.
- For all the water protectors at Standing Rock, North Dakota and all those who are standing in solidarity and providing for their needs.
- For First United Church-Belvidere, Tennessee and Pastor Jan Whiteman as she begins her ministry November 27. (See article elsewhere in this newsletter.)
- Prayers for the healing of the nation and that we may be a people of light and reconciliation so that we live the message that God is Love and that all are welcome no matter who they are or where they are on life's journey.

Prayer List

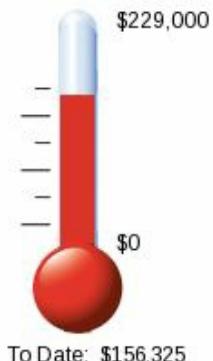
We are continuing the process of praying for authorized ministers, congregations, and ministry groups throughout 2016. We encourage you to include these prayer requests in your local church newsletter, share them with your prayer circle, and include them in your own prayers. [Click here to download the entire 2016 prayer list.](#)

Authorizing Ministry in the 21st Century
Nov 30 - Dec 3, 2016
San Antonio, Texas

SEC Staff Meeting
Thu, Dec 8, 2016
Conference Office

Conference Moves to a Virtual Office
January 1, 2017

OCWM Giving



Our Church's Wider Mission provides for programs, resources, and tools to keep our churches strong, effective, and growing. We're currently at 68% of our goal!

Conference Staff

June Boutwell
Designated Conference Minister
jboutwell@secucc.org

Heather Bardole
Registrar and Office Administrator
registrar@secucc.org

Sarah Kim
Executive Director of Theological Education and Dean of PATHWAYS
skim@secucc.org

Debbie Spearman
Generosity Coordinator
dspearman@secucc.org

Don Harris
Director of Communications
communicationsdirector@secucc.org

Chris Lyman Waldron
IT Specialist
clwaldron@secucc.org

Week of November 20:

- New Hope Congregational Christian UCC-Clio, Alabama
- William Derstine
- Lewis Kola
- Daniel Rosemerry
- Irvin Whitley

Week of November 27:

- The United Church-Huntsville, Alabama
- Richard Diekmann
- Gerald Kummer
- Jeremy Rutledge
- Scott Williamson

Conference Transitions

- The Southeast Conference Board of Directors has appointed an **interim search committee** who has begun its work with the assistance of Lee Albertson on the national UCC staff. The interim search committee is chaired by Rebecca Seldomridge, chair of the SEC personnel committee. Members are: Glenna Shepherd and Vanessa Robbs from Tennessee and Heath Battles from Alabama. Interviews for the Georgia representative are still ongoing.
- **Pastor Jan Whiteman** will begin her ministry at First United Church-Belvidere Tennessee on November 27.
- **Emmanuel UCC** in Greenville, South Carolina and **Rehoboth Fellowship** of Atlanta were approved by the Commission on Ministry at their November 5th meeting to move from new church start to churches with full standing. Rehoboth Fellowship will be recognized on November 20 and Emmanuel UCC will be recognized on November 27.
- Welcome to **Heather Bardole** who will fill the staff position of Southeast Conference Registrar and Office Administrator. She begins on November 18.

Churches in Transition

Oak Grove Congregational Christian, Pine Mountain Georgia; Pilgrim Congregational UCC, Chattanooga Tennessee; Brookmeade Congregational UCC, Nashville Tennessee; Howard Congregational UCC, Nashville Tennessee; Holy Trinity Community Church, Nashville Tennessee.

Conference Staff Announcement

The Conference office is pleased to announce that Heather Bardole will begin as part-time office administrator and Registrar on November 18, 2017. She will be assisting in the conversion of files to a digital format and moving to the virtual office. As Registrar, she will be supporting the work of the Commission on Ministry and maintaining clergy and church standing files. The office is also grateful for Michelle Holtmann, vice chair of the Commission on Ministry, who has been volunteering hours to assist in the file conversion project.

Mailing Address:

105 Courtland St NE
Atlanta, GA 30303-2422

Office Location:

125 Ellis St NE
Atlanta, GA 30303-2404

Phone: 404-607-1993

www.secucc.org

Connect with Us!





Michelle Holtmann and Heather Bardole

East Alabama West Georgia Association

The East Alabama West Georgia Association met in LaGrange, Georgia on October 15. Rev. Wayde Washburn, Moderator, and Ms. Betty Moon, Secretary welcomed representatives from the four churches of the Association-Columbus United (Columbus, Georgia), Oak Grove Congregational Christian (Pine Mountain, Georgia), Jones Chapel (Woodbury, Georgia), and Sandy Creek United Church of Christ (LaFayette, Alabama).

The agenda included a presentation of the current state of the Association and discussion of the ongoing ministry of the Association. All delegates present were encouraged to take the discussion back to their congregations for wider conversation. The Association will meet again in Jan 2017.

Upper Room Fellowship Gathered in Nashville

The Upper Room Fellowship of Nashville held their fall gathering on October 22, 2016 at Howard Congregational Church UCC. Rev. June Boutwell was the speaker on the theme of "Good to Be Near God" from Psalm 73. As usual, there was a wonderful potluck meal prior to the worship service which was enjoyed by all. [View photos on our Facebook page.](#)

PATHWAYS Faculty Member of the Year 2016

PATHWAYS is proud to announce that the honor of Faculty Member of the Year in 2016 goes to Rev. Dr. Trish Towle Greeves. Dr. Greeves, who attends the Pilgrimage UCC in Marietta, GA, has been facilitating courses with PATHWAYS and serving on the PATHWAYS Advisory Committee since spring of 2015. This fall, she's engaging the motivated learner participants with courses in *Thinking Theologically in the 21st Century*, *Supervised Ministry Practicum*, and PATHWAYS' new course offering-Explorer Series Course-in Biblical studies titled, *What About the Bible? Reading Scripture Through the Lens of Progressive Theology*. [Read more about Dr. Greeves on our website.](#)



News from Around the Conference

Ecclesiastical Council Approves Kate Stulce

An Ecclesiastical Council was held on November 5 at Pilgrim Congregational UCC in Chattanooga to examine Kate Stulce for ordination. Kate opened with remarks including one of her favorite songs. Those gathered then asked her questions about her calling and vocation. Her mentor, Rev. Henrietta Andrews, spoke on her behalf. The congregation present, gathered as the Council, unanimously approved Kate for ordination pending call. Rev. David Brown, former pastor of Pilgrim and Rev. Marvin Morgan, current interim offered prayers.



Jan and Karl Whiteman Return to Belvidere

Pastor Jan Whiteman has received and accepted a call as pastor at First United Church UCC in Belvidere, Tennessee. Jan was born and raised in Northeast Pennsylvania and is a lifelong UCC member. Returning to Belvidere feels like returning home! Jan lived in Belvidere for three years between 1993 and 1996 when her husband, Karl served as pastor at First United Church UCC. During those years, Jan served as Secretary of the Southeast Conference Board of Directors. [Read more on our website.](#)

Rev. Dr. Artis Johnson honored for 43 years of service.

Evergreen Congregational UCC, Beachton (Thomasville), Georgia celebrated the 43rd ordination anniversary of Rev. Dr. Artis Johnson, Sr. during their worship service on November 6. Rev. June Boutwell, Designated Conference Minister preached on the theme of All Saints Day. Rev. Johnson was also recognized as the first African American to graduate from Birdwood Primitive Baptist Junior College (now Thomas University) and was the first African American to be ordained by

the Georgia South Carolina Association of the Southeast Conference. He was presented with a certificate recognizing his 43 years of ordained ministry and Rev. Boutwell read a proclamation honoring him for his path-making and achievement in the church and community.



Alternative Gift Market at Central UCC

Give gifts that give back! Your Christmas shopping can begin at the Alternative Gift Market on November 20, 9:30 am to 1:30 pm, in the commons area at Central UCC in Atlanta. Choose gifts that give back - within our church, locally, and globally! Gifts for sale will include Christmas decorations, jewelry, hand-painted glassware, scarves and baskets. In addition, through Church World Service, you can sponsor gifts such as: water filtration systems, gardening supplies, disaster relief supplies, refugee support, educational toys, and more. There will be multiple organizations benefiting. Come enjoy refreshments and buy "gifts for good!" Contact Paula Emde:agm@central-ucc.org.

Church of the Savior Observes Transgender Day of Remembrance on Nov 20

Church of the Savior UCC in Alpharetta, Georgia will host a community inter-faith vigil at 5 PM on Sunday, November 20, in observance of Transgender Day of Remembrance (TDOR), a day set aside annually to memorialize those who have been killed due to anti-transgender hatred or prejudice. Though a day of mourning for transgender persons who have lost their lives, TDOR is also a day to renew our commitment to stand with the transgender community whenever their rights and dignity as human beings are under attack.

Rev. Paul Hackett will lead this candlelight vigil to honor the memory of transgender victims with music, contemplative silence, and a reading of names/bell ringing. He also will speak on the importance of support for our transgender and LGBTQ family members and friends, and is calling on the community to place greater importance on advocating and supporting LGBTQ+ youth, teens, and adults. For more information visit COSUCC.org or e-mail Admin@COSUCC.org.

To learn more about how other UCC congregations observe Transgender Day of Remembrance, visit the [Open and Affirming Coalition website](#).

News from the United Church of Christ

Revised and Updated: Any Body, Every Body, and Christ's Body

The UCC Disabilities Ministries Board of Directors has recently announced the release of an updated publication "Any Body, Every Body, and Christ's Body: A Guide for Congregations, Association, and Congregations for Becoming Accessible to All." Becoming Accessible to All (A2A) is a response to the growing need for churches to become accessible for all persons with disabilities. [Learn more.](#)

ONA 201 webinars: What's Next for your ONA Church?

Join Coalition executive director Andy Lang for this church-transforming webinar. Has your ONA congregation ever asked, "what's next for our church?" Andy's webinar will share best practices from thriving ONA churches - churches that are active in mission, ministry, evangelism and advocacy. ONA churches that are visible in their communities are also growing churches, and often the growth results from young Millennial couples who identify with ONA values. The webinar will repeat on two dates: Nov. 15 and Dec. 6. We've kept the cost low at \$30, and there are discounts if multiple participants share the same computer or screen. [Register Online.](#)

Training and Retreat Opportunities

Winter Youth Retreat 2017

Early Registration Deadline is November 4

When: January 13-16, 2017

Theme: What is your purpose?

Speaker: Rev. Scott Hardin-Nieri from Asheville, NC

We will welcome back Mandee and Christi from Alathea, and are shaking up the break-out sessions by asking students from Wake Forest Divinity School to create and facilitate them. Last, we will offer a few new service opportunities.

[Download the Retreat Flyer](#)

[Download the Retreat Registration Form](#)

[Winter Youth Retreat Website](#)

UCC Scholarship Applications Open Dec 1

Ministry Education Scholarships support those preparing for ministry in the UCC and provide emergency assistance to ministers experiencing financial or personal crisis.

Leadership Development Scholarships help to support UCC undergraduate students, future seminary professors, African American laywomen, and gifted persons with disabilities, among others. The Genesis Fund accepts applications for faith-based projects that are innovative or experimental, that represent a new initiative in Christian mission, or that may be deemed controversial. UCC local churches, associations, conferences, national bodies, UCC-related institutions, and overseas/global partner churches are eligible to apply.

Scholarship application forms and grant applications open online on Thursday, December 1st. Find more scholarship information at <http://www.ucc.org/scholarships>. Questions can be emailed to scholarships@ucc.org.

Save the Date: Conferences in 2017

Southern Region Women's Conference

Make plans now to join others from around our region at Mo Ranch in Hunt, Texas from October 20-22, 2017. We will be hosted by the women of the South Central Conference.

UCC Musicians Conference

Their National Biennial Conference will be held July 9-12, 2017 in Boston, Massachusetts. The theme is Empowering Musicians, Transforming Communities. [Learn more.](#)

Bi-Vocational Clergy-Research Study on Burnout Factors

Calling for participants to join J. Clark Griffin, III, a doctoral student in general psychology at Capella University to join him in a dissertation research study on what bi-vocational clergy associate with burnout in their experience. The date and time will be determined later. The participant and the researcher will utilize Skype for the interview. The purpose of this research is to determine from the experiences of bi-vocational clergy what they associate with burnout from their dual professions/ positions. For details contact J. Clark Griffin, III at (254) 265-4677 for information and/or to participate in the study.